

**The Report of the
Accreditation Visiting Team**

**Bennion Junior High School
6055 South 2700 West
Taylorsville, Utah 84118-5934**

October 21-22, 2003



Utah State Office of Education
250 East 500 South
P.O. Box 144200
Salt Lake City, Utah 84114-4200

**THE REPORT OF THE
VISITING TEAM REVIEWING**

**Bennion Junior High School
6055 South 2700 West
Taylorsville, UT 84118-5934**

October 21-22, 2003

UTAH STATE OFFICE OF EDUCATION

**Steven O. Laing, Ed.D.
State Superintendent of Public Instruction**

**DIVISION OF
STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT AND SCHOOL SUCCESS**

Patti Harrington, Associate Superintendent

**Vicky Dahn, Director
Curriculum and Instruction**

**Georgia Loutensock, Accreditation Specialist
Curriculum and Instruction**

Salt Lake City, Utah

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FOREWORD

A major purpose of the accreditation process is to stimulate inservice growth and school improvement. Consequently, requirements include not only meeting the standards of the Utah State Office of Education, but also completing a school evaluation every six years.

School evaluation is that effort by the local school staff to take a comprehensive look at the school's program, operation, and effect. The school determines how closely its purposes and philosophy coincide with its actual practices and the degree to which its stated objectives are being reached. It is a three-phased program: (1) self-evaluation, (2) on-site evaluation by an external team of educators, and (3) implementation using units of the evaluation to improve the school by effecting thoughtful change.

The evaluation, October 21-22, 2003, was conducted because of the school's desire to ensure quality education for all students in the school, and to meet the requirements referred to above.

The entire staff of Bennion Junior High School is commended for the time and effort devoted to studying and evaluating the various facets of the total program and to preparing the materials used by the Visiting Team. The excellent leadership given by Principal Terri Van Winkle is commended.

The staff and administration are congratulated for the generally fine program being provided for Bennion Junior High School students, and also for the professional attitude of all members of the group, which made it possible for them to see areas of weakness and strength and to suggest procedures for bringing about improvements.

While these recommendations may be used to solicit financial support to acquire some of the materials, equipment, and services needed to carry out a more effective program, it is even more important that the faculty and administration utilize them as they continue to evaluate and modify course offerings and administrative and classroom procedures to more adequately meet the needs of the students of Bennion Junior High School.

Steven O. Laing, Ed.D.
State Superintendent
of Public Instruction

UTAH STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
250 East 500 South
P.O. Box 144200
Salt Lake City, Utah 84114-4200

District 1

Teresa L. Theurer
66 Canterbury Circle
Logan, UT 84321
Phone: (435) 753-0740

District 6

Tim Beagley
3084 South 3550 West
West Valley City, UT 84119
Phone: (801) 969-6454

District 11

David L. Moss
1964 Hawk Circle
Sandy, UT 84092
Phone: (801) 572-6144

District 2

Greg W. Haws
5841 West 4600 South
Hooper, UT 84315
Phone: (801) 985-7980

District 7

John C. Pingree
1389 Harvard Avenue
Salt Lake City, UT 84105
Phone: (801) 582-5635

District 12

Mike Anderson
455 East 200 North
Lindon, UT 84042
Phone: (801) 785-1212

District 3

Edward Dalton
1323 Bryan Road
Erda, UT 84074
Phone: (435) 882-4498

District 8

Janet A. Cannon
5256 Holladay Blvd.
Salt Lake City, UT 84117
Phone: (801) 272-3516

District 13

Linnea S. Barney
1965 South Main Street
Orem, UT 84058
Phone: (801) 225-4149

District 4

Joyce W. Richards
930 East 5000 South
Ogden, UT 84403
Phone: (801) 479-5370

District 9

Denis R. Morrill
6024 South 2200 West
Taylorsville, UT 84118
Phone: (801) 969-2334

District 14

Dixie Allen
1065 South 500 West
Vernal, UT 84078
Phone: (435) 789-0534

District 5

Kim R. Burningham
932 Canyon Crest Drive
Bountiful, UT 84010
Phone: (801) 292-9261

District 10

Laurel Brown
5311 South Lucky Clover Ln
Murray, UT 84123
Phone: (801) 261-4221

District 15

Debra G. Roberts
Box 1780
Beaver, UT 84713
Phone: (435) 438-5843

Jed H. Pitcher*

Regence Blue Cross Blue Shield of Utah
PO Box 30270
Salt Lake City, UT 84108
Phone: (801) 583-2375

Sara V. Sinclair*

1340 North 1500 East
Logan, UT 84341-2851
Phone: (435) 754-0216

Steven O. Laing
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Secretary

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10/30/03

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Dr. Jim Henderson, Director	Instructional Technology
Dr. Darryl Thomas, Director	Research, Assessment, Evaluation
Mary Alice Rudelich, Director	Curriculum Services
Dr. Kathryn McCarrie, Director	Special Education Department
Kent Fine, Supervisor	Custodial Services
Bob Ward, Director	Food Services
Jerry Nielsen, Chief of Police	Police Department
Jerry Pulsipher, Director	Planning & Boundaries
Jim Day, Director	School Facilities
Tom Given, Director	Transportation

BENNION JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

ADMINISTRATION AND STAFF

School Administration

Terri Van Winkle Principal
Barbara Marsh Assistant Principal

Counseling

Spencer Anderson 9th Grade Counselor
Roger Ashton 8th Grade Counselor
Elvia George 7th Grade Counselor

Support Staff

Jeremy Alverson Attendance Tracker
Kim Cleverly Assistant Custodian
Dianne Denter Lunchroom Worker
Ofelia Espinosa Lunchroom Worker
Kathryn Finau Resource Classroom Aide
Jacque Folster Special Education Classroom Aide
Rose Fresquez Lunchroom Worker
Mary Lou Garn Reading Classroom Aide
Shirlene Handy Assistant Custodian
Stacy Handy Wheelchair Classroom Aide
Kathy Harper Lunchroom Worker
Marlene Huber Bookkeeper
Deann Jensen Comprehensive Guidance Assistant
Bonnie Jones Kitchen Worker
Carol LeFevre Special Education Classroom Aide
Jim Miller YESS Classroom Aide
Roselyn Netzler ISC Supervisor
Gay Lynn Osness Principal's Secretary
Peggy Park Library Aide
Janalyn Pendlebury Special Education Classroom Aide
Lave Purcell Counseling Secretary
Marty Putscher Associate Custodian
Rocky Rhodes Head Custodian
Brian Royce Assistant Custodian
Michelle Shepherd SMART Classroom Aide
Brandon Smith Behavior Tracker
Emileen Wilson Wheelchair Classroom Aide
Deb Youngdell Special Education Classroom Aide

District Support Staff

Alisha Bowling TCM
Kathy Buller Social Worker
Jan Crosby Psychologist
Mandy Henroid Prevention Specialist
Terri Jackson Hearing
Paul McFarland Speech

Teachers

Whitney Afoa	JoAnn Heiner	Jennifer Samples
Terril Atkins	John Hughes	Randy Schreiter
Anne Black	Pam Hunter	Mary Shaw
Ted Brinton	Marcia Joye	Kathleen Smith
Alex Castro	Kristen Lindman	Verlyn Spring
Mike Ching	Chris Marden	Diane Thomas-Timper
Paul Christiansen	Roy Martinez	Cathy Thompson
Andrea Davis	Selova Merini	Carl Thorkildsen
Susan Dobie	Troy Moore	Melinda Tomeo
Sandra Engh	Pete Mortenson	Yen Tran
Marilee Fagergren	Suzanne Nielsen	Karen Walbridge
B. Jay Fairbanks	Stephen Perschon	Debra Willes
Hadi Fallahi	Terry Pietsch	Linda Williams
Tiffany Gibbs	Anne Puzey	Nancy Wing
Susette Green	Ann Ricks	
Dennis Heidel	Jim Saltas	

BENNION JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

MISSION STATEMENT

Our purpose at Bennion Junior High School is to provide a safe, equitable learning environment that will facilitate a quality education for all students regardless of race, gender, ethnic origin, religion, or disabling condition.

The goal of Bennion Junior High School staff is to endow our students with knowledge, understanding, and skills needed for success and achievement in the diverse changing world.

Bennion Junior High School incorporates the values of caring, trust, family, respect, and responsibility in our instruction and advocacy of all students.

BELIEF STATEMENTS

At Bennion Junior High School we believe that...

1. Teachers, administrators, parents, staff, students and the community share the responsibility for advancing the school's mission.
2. Students learn best when they are actively engaged in the learning process and are provided with appropriate opportunities for success.
3. Core curriculum and instructional practices should incorporate a variety of learning activities and instructional approaches to accommodate differences among students.
4. An emotionally and physically safe environment promotes student learning.
5. Clear and high expectations from teachers and parents result in higher student achievement.
6. Each student is a valued individual with unique physical, social, emotional, and intellectual needs.

MEMBERS OF THE VISITING TEAM

Greg Proffit, Ecker Hill Middle School, Park City School District,
Visiting Team Chairperson

Edy McGee, Indian Hills Middle School, Jordan School District

Michael Goodman, Mount Jordan Middle School, Jordan School District

Sharon Jensen, Crescent View Middle School, Jordan School District

CeCie Scharman, Salt Lake City School District

VISITING TEAM REPORT
BENNION JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

CHAPTER 1: SCHOOL PROFILE

Bennion Junior High School opened in 1980. Currently there are approximately 1,000 students in the 7th, 8th, and 9th grades. The teaching staff consists of 45 teachers who teach the Utah Core Curriculum as well as a variety of locally developed offerings.

The school is in the process of learning and adopting contemporary middle school philosophy and practices while maintaining the traditions and commitments to quality that the school has already developed.

Over the past two years, all stakeholders have had the opportunity to participate actively in the accreditation process. The Visiting Team feels that there is an overall sense of purpose and commitment to the ideals represented by the state accreditation process.

a) *What significant findings were revealed by the school's analysis of its profile?*

The Visiting Team verified that teachers, students, parents, administrators, and counselors met in a variety of departmental, community, grade level, and mixed-function groups to create a school profile. This process created:

- A recognition of the importance of teachers' willingness to work together within grade levels, across departments, and throughout the school.
- A realization that literacy, numeracy, and the desired results for student learning must be taught systemically, across the entire school.
- An inventory (and celebration) of the variety of effective instructional practices employed by Bennion Junior High School teachers.

b) *What modifications to the school profile should the school consider for the future?*

The Visiting Team recognizes and applauds the hard work and commitment that the school community members of Bennion Junior High School put into developing the school profile. The school profile is one of the best that members of the Visiting Team have seen. It is suggested that future editions include:

- Refining and communicating the schoolwide goals. Numeracy, literacy, and overall school climate are not overtly listed in the desired results for student

learning (DRSLs). Although interviews and anecdotal accounts indicate this is an important area, these are not spelled out in the school's profile document.

- List faculty accomplishments. In the Faculty and Staff section of the profile document, recognize department chairs, other school responsibilities, those currently enrolled in advanced degree or endorsement programs, membership in professional organizations, etc.
- Refine data reports. Provide greater attention to the standardized test data charts, including table titles and headings, disaggregated reporting of test results, and reporting in terms of levels of student proficiency.

CHAPTER 2: THE SELF-STUDY PROCESS

- a) *To what extent has the school community engaged in a collaborative self-study process on behalf of students?*

The Visiting Team verified that teachers, students, parents, administrators, and counselors met in a variety of departmental, community, grade level, and mixed-role groups. These meetings took place over the past two years on early release Fridays and after school. The school profile and the Visiting Team's interviews support the school's engagement in collaborative self-study.

- b) *To what extent does the school's self-study accurately reflect the school's current strengths and limitations?*

Through teacher interviews and classroom observations, the Visiting Team found significant congruence between the practices represented in the school profile and the day-to-day practices found at the school. The Visiting Team found anecdotal evidence at the school that suggests that there is actually more reliance on data to make decisions than is represented in the written school profile. It is evident that the school knows itself very well, as shown in the department analyses section.

CHAPTER 3: INSTRUCTIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

Bennion Junior High School's desired results for student learning (DRSLs) are as follows:

1. Character Education
2. Complex/ Critical Thinking
3. Communication Skills
4. Life Skills

Shared Vision, Beliefs, Mission, and Goals:

- a) *To what extent did the school facilitate a collaborative process to build a shared vision for the school (mission) that defines a compelling purpose and direction for the school?*

There is evidence that the administration, school leadership team, and faculty assumed the primary responsibility for developing the school's mission statement and guiding belief statements. The NSSE belief statement inventory helped the faculty in this process. Other stakeholders, such as students, parents, and community members had, opportunities to provide input and feedback through the consensus-building process to define the school's shared vision.

- b) *To what extent has the school defined a set of beliefs that reflect the commitment of the administration and staff to support student achievement and success?*

The majority of belief statements describe the core values that the staff has about what students need to be successful. They include environmental and responsibility issues. Two belief statements address learning styles and teaching strategies. The Visiting Team recommends that at least one belief statement be included that speaks directly to student achievement and/or continuous improvement goals.

- c) *To what extent do the school's mission and beliefs align to support the school's desired results for student learning (DRSLs)?*

There is a beginning toward the alignment of the school's mission, beliefs, and DRSLs, which together reflect the school's commitment to the needs of young adolescents. There is evidence that the school's faculty is making the effort to incorporate the mission, beliefs, and DRSLs into the classroom and to build student awareness of them. The faculty has outlined plans by department to incorporate the DRSLs into the curriculum. They have done a thorough review of their own departmental commendations and recommendations.

Curriculum Development:

- a) *To what extent does the staff work collaboratively to ensure the curriculum is based on clearly defined standards and the Utah Core Curriculum (with inclusion of the Utah Life Skills)?*

The teaching staff at Bennion Junior High uses the Utah State Core Curriculum as its standards and objectives and as a guide to curriculum development.

The process of analyzing and using data to determine the school's goals has had a positive outcome. Teachers have felt that the process and the ensuing dialogue have tremendously enhanced the quality of their plan for achieving school goals.

- b) *To what extent does the teaching staff work collaboratively to support the development of a curriculum that focuses on the school's desired results for student learning?*

The entire accreditation process created a situation where administration and staff had to collaborate in order to achieve their goal.

Interdisciplinary teams have been established for each grade level. Each grade level team includes one representative each from the English, Science, and Social Studies Departments. Representatives from the Math and Special Education Departments work with the teams on an as-needed basis. Those who teach elective courses comprise a team of their own. These teachers are currently working on the school goal for improving school climate.

Teaming is in its first year of implementation. The administration and staff realize that they have a long way to go before it is fully operational. They have expressed that being able to talk with teachers other than those in their own departments has been a very positive experience and that they are eager to continue the process. Teaming will provide a method for tracking all students in the school and provide assistance to those students who need some additional help to succeed.

Releasing students early on Friday in order to allow teachers time to work with their teams, and to provide staff development necessary to meet school goals, has been very successful. We strongly recommend continuing this schedule. Staff members and parents seem to be benefiting from it.

Departmental meetings also are providing an opportunity to explore ways to meet goals concerning literacy, numeracy, and school climate

Quality Instructional Design:

- a) *To what extent does the professional staff design and implement a variety of learning experiences that actively engage students?*

It is evident that the professional staff designs and demonstrates a variety of effective instructional strategies. As a faculty, they were observed using strategies which engage the learner and address a variety of learning styles. It was obvious

that the teachers are aware of best practice strategies and have corresponding activities that are aligned with their performance expectations for students.

The Visiting Team observed teachers using demonstrations, laboratory exercises, class discussions, collaborative group work, problem solving, direct instruction, independent student work, and role playing by both students and teachers, as well as effective use of video instruction.

During an interview of student leaders, they were able to list a variety of practices used by teachers which aid student learning. Students were able to list numerous faculty members who use each strategy on a continual basis.

- b) *To what extent does the professional staff employ a variety of instructional strategies to ensure the needs of different learners are met?*

The Visiting Team observed a variety of instructional strategies aimed at diverse learning needs. Teacher instructions were both visual and auditory. Advanced organizers were up on boards in many classrooms. Assignments given to students included student choice and independent learning opportunities. The Elective and Fine Arts Departments had a variety of student work on display to show both variety and mastery. Students were observed rehearsing for concerts and working diligently toward improvement.

- c) *To what extent do the professional staff and leadership provide additional opportunities which support student learning?*

The Bennion Junior High School Math Department has fliers posted in the school advertising Math Tutoring three days a week after school and one morning a week. The school has a S.M.A.R.T. program designed to intervene with students struggling both behaviorally and academically. This program and its implications for future student success were very impressive to the Visiting Team.

Quality Assessment Systems:

- a) *To what extent has the staff developed classroom or schoolwide assessments based on clearly articulated expectations for student achievement?*

Daily and, in many cases, weekly assignments are posted in the classrooms. All students have been given a planner to help each student track assignments and progress. The Visiting Team observed the school mission statement posted in each room. The teachers are conversant with the school DRSLs but are not clear on how the DRSLs guide schoolwide curriculum development and instructional practices in individual classrooms. Some students are able to identify some elements of the school's DRSLs but, again, do not understand the value of the DRSLs in their classroom experience. Many teachers provide rubrics for students

to evaluate their own work, and a variety of effective instructional methods and activities were observed by the Visiting Team. Teachers have also used a variety of assessment tools, including STAR Reading and STAR Math, to evaluate student progress in individual classes. Year-end level testing (e.g., SATs and CRTs) appears to be the only schoolwide assessment used to measure school improvement and growth. Disaggregation of the data is needed to assess individual student progress. The Visiting Team was impressed by the overall commitment of the school personnel to student needs and academic improvement.

- b) *To what extent are assessments of student learning developed using methods that reflect the intended purpose and performance standards?*

Teachers are using the State Core Curriculum and National Standards as guides for assessment. The recent implementation of grade level, interdisciplinary teams has had an impact on the movement of the school toward the development of schoolwide, benchmark assessments to prepare students for state-mandated testing. The emphasis is shifting from departmental and classroom-centered assessment to schoolwide assessment. Because the school's DRSLs have only recently been adopted, the Visiting Team found that many teachers are not yet comfortable with them, nor do they understand the role of DRSLs in their instructional practices. Greater emphasis on clarifying the usefulness of DRSLs in curriculum development will also help in developing schoolwide assessment of student learning and progress.

- c) *To what extent are assessments designed, developed, and used in a fair and equitable manner?*

Teachers identified for the Visiting Team a wide variety of assessment tools, including written and oral reports and presentations, performances, products, artwork, class participation, and testing. Students could only identify testing and written reports as indicators of what they know.

Leadership for School Improvement:

- a) *To what extent does the school leadership promote quality instruction by fostering an academic learning climate and actively supporting teaching and learning?*

The leadership team at Bennion Junior High School extends beyond the administration. Guidance counselors are key players as well. The Visiting Team applauds the school's leadership for knowing the academic progress of each of its potential at-risk students. The Counseling Department regularly evaluates the academic progress of students and shares pertinent information with teachers during the weekly team meetings. Teachers report that the leadership team is supportive of their goals and objectives. Furthermore, students report that both the leadership of the school and their teachers make it clear that student learning

is what Bennion Junior High is about. Leadership decisions are made on the basis of what is best for the students.

Another group of adults who have served as school leaders are parents. Many served as members of the focus groups. Others are members of the School Community Council. These individuals worked with teachers, counselors, and administrators to evaluate the effectiveness of the school. They report that their opinions and suggestions were validated and considered.

In addition to adults performing leadership roles, Bennion Junior High students function in that capacity as well. For example, the school has a rather large, participative group of student body officers who are responsible for planning and executing activities aimed at promoting school unity and spirit. These students also send a personalized birthday card to each member of the student body. Another group of students who are actively involved in leadership is the Peer Leadership Team. These students are responsible for orientation activities for incoming seventh graders, including Bobcat Buddies and Bobcats on Parade. They are also in charge of Red Ribbon Week. Additionally, they decorate lockers of students who may not be recognized in other ways.

- b) *To what extent does the school leadership employ effective decision making that is data-driven, research-based, and collaborative?*

School personnel reported to the Visiting Team that the leadership of the school is very much cognizant of current research. Faculty members have had the opportunity to attend workshops in brain research. Furthermore, the administration provides faculty members with articles about current topics which would be appropriate in their areas of expertise. Additionally, the plan to adopt a middle school philosophy is a prime example of leading the school in a researched-based direction.

Teaming plays a critical role in the collaboration process. The Visiting Team commends the leadership at Bennion Junior High for supporting and facilitating teaming efforts. Teachers indicated that during team meetings, data is examined and decisions are collaboratively made, the goal of which is to improve student learning.

- c) *To what extent does the school leadership monitor progress in student achievement and instructional effectiveness through a comprehensive assessment system and continuous reflection?*

The administration at Bennion Junior High is using data obtained from CRTs and SATs as they meet with teachers. Data is shared with teachers so that they can become aware of what their students are learning and what are the areas of concern. The administration met individually with teachers until this year, when they shifted and started meeting with each department. Also, the leadership looks

at SAT and CRT scores to help inform their decisions about placing students on monitor status and including them in support programs such as S.M.A.R.T. They also use lists of data prepared weekly by the counselors that identify students with particular needs.

Currently, Bennion Junior High does not have a comprehensive assessment program in place. They use components of such a system to help in their decision making. However, as they work to develop a comprehensive program, they will be able to increase instructional effectiveness and provide material for continuous reflection.

- d) *To what extent does the school leadership provide skillful stewardship by ensuring management of the organization, operations, and resources of the school for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment?*

The Visiting Team commends the leadership at Bennion Junior High for the efforts it has made in facilitating change. The leadership has managed to change the direction of the school to a more collaborative, participative organization and create a culture conducive to change. Parents, teachers, and students state how pleased they are with the current direction of the school. Students and teachers alike feel safe and respected at the school. Staff members also commended the administration for creating an atmosphere of inclusion and unity.

- e) *To what extent does the school leadership make decisions related to the allocation and use of resources which align with the school goals, the achievement of the DRSLs, and school improvement efforts?*

Although the DRSLs need refinement, the teachers and students were able to articulate them if prompted. Teachers reported that the administration has been very generous with resources. They repeatedly said that they had never been denied a request for materials. Also, some teachers reported that they had been to conferences. They also indicated that the administration is aware of individual teachers' improvement plans and supports those efforts with resources.

Based on conversations with the leadership at Bennion Junior High, the Visiting Team is confident of the leadership's commitment to the improvements identified by the school community during the self-study process.

- f) *To what extent does the school leadership empower the school community and encourage commitment, participation, collaboration, and shared responsibility for student learning?*

In conversations with teachers, counselors, and administrators, the Visiting Team learned that Bennion Junior High has made great strides toward working collaboratively. All groups admitted that the process was difficult in the beginning. However, all groups reported that the current situation is much

improved. They all feel that they have developed a culture of mutual respect where all share the responsibility for student learning.

Community Building:

- a) *To what extent does the school foster community building and working relationships within the school?*

The Community of Caring Program provides a strong foundation for fostering a strong sense of community with students, parents, and staff. The five core values of respect, responsibility, trust, caring, and family permeate all relationships. Students repeatedly expressed the opinion that they like their teachers and feel that their teachers genuinely care about them. The parents that the Visiting Team had the opportunity to talk to also expressed the same sentiment. In addition, staff members stated that there is a high sense of collegiality and that they care about each other.

- b) *To what extent does the school extend the school community through collaborative networks that support student learning?*

The school offers a variety of activities to support and enhance student learning. Activities are held both during and after the school day. They include guest speakers from the community, service-learning, tutoring, a variety of fine arts and sports activities, teen forums, a school advisory team, academic team, etc. Parents and the community are involved through a very active PTSA and School Community Council, the Neighborhood Action Coalition, and Bennion on Parade. The Visiting Team does recommend that the school actively pursue a partnership with one or two businesses in the area to further enhance community relations.

Culture of Continuous Improvement and Learning:

- a) *To what extent does the school build skills and the capacity for improvement through comprehensive and ongoing professional development programs focused on the school's goals for improvement?*

The Visiting Team found that the administration is extremely supportive of ongoing teacher development by providing funds for teachers to attend professional workshops locally, well as the National Middle School Conference. Many teachers are enrolled in master's degree programs or university programs for ESL, GT, and technology endorsements. Two Friday planning meetings each month are used for professional development targeting middle-level reform, schoolwide literacy and numeracy, and collaborative teaming.

- b) *To what extent does the school create conditions that support productive change and continuous improvement?*

The Visiting Team finds that the administrators, teachers, and support staff have made great strides in adopting and implementing the middle school philosophy, cross-curricular instruction, and teaming over the last three years. The school stakeholders demonstrate an enthusiastic attitude about, and a commitment to, continuous improvement that will have an impact on student learning.

CHAPTER 4: NORTHWEST ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS AND OF COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES (NASCU) STANDARDS I-XI

This section is not applicable to Bennion Junior High School. Most Utah public junior high/middle schools are not accredited through the NASCU, but only by the USOE – it is their choice to join or not.

CHAPTER 5: SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT EFFORTS – ACTION PLAN

- a) *To what extent is the schoolwide action plan adequate in addressing the critical areas for follow-up?*

The Visiting Team recommends an ongoing review of the schoolwide action plan. It names two primary goals: Communication and Collaboration. (However, additional school-community dialogue is required to verify and/or reinforce these areas of schoolwide focus for improvement.) The Visiting Team feels that the plans listed in the school profile will need to be reexamined to include evidence of success and additional details. The submitted action plan serves as a good outline and starting point for continuous school improvement steps.

- Communication. Include references to the specific data and to the systemic processes or devices or mechanisms that will be used to report student performance (e.g., teacher/PTSA/school newsletters, meetings, back to school events, e-mails, web page information, telephone, grades, standardized test scores, attendance, club participation, perception data, etc.). Include indicators of success (data) for each action step undertaken.
- Collaboration. List specific dates, groups, materials, funding resources, and training that will be required to complete the action steps. For example, curriculum mapping may require full-faculty orientations, teacher leader

training, online subscriptions, professional development materials, expert resources, teacher release time, and designated funding sources. Include indicators of success (data) for each action step undertaken.

- b) *To what extent is there sufficient commitment to the action plan, schoolwide and systemwide?*

Parents, teachers, administrators, and counselors have repeatedly stated their support for the direction that the school has charted. The Visiting Team feels that there is excellent commitment at the school and community levels.

- c) *How sound does the follow-up process that the school intends to use for monitoring the accomplishments of the schoolwide action plan appear to be?*

See Chapter 5, Item a, above. School leadership must ensure that communication and collaboration continue.

CHAPTER 6: MAJOR COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE VISITING TEAM

Commendations:

- Collaboration. The Visiting Team concludes that Bennion Junior High School has fully engaged in the self-study process. The barriers of professional isolation have been broken; a spirit of communication and collaboration runs through the building. The school's faculty and staff exhibit excitement and commitment to continuous improvement.
- Student Connection. The day-to-day routine of student life at Bennion Junior High School reflects a school that embraces student learning and involvement. A variety of opportunities exist for kids that allow them to feel connected with their school. Teacher expectations are high and students can get the support that they need to experience success. Student after student reported the best thing about Bennion Junior High School: "The teachers." This sentiment was reflected in the comments of parents as well.
- Middle Level Philosophy. The Visiting Team applauds Bennion Junior High School's collaborative efforts to move toward middle level reform and best practices for students. Practices based on what is best for students are the top priority in this school.

- Departments. Bennion Junior High School's departments engaged in an extremely valuable and insightful self-study. The Visiting Team found evidence that departments have used the self-study to guide their current direction.

Recommendations:

- Desired Results for Student Learning. The Visiting Team recommends that overt steps be taken to ensure that all stakeholders fully understand the potential deep impact of the desired results for students learning. This understanding must be a routine part of teacher lesson planning, and apparent across the classroom curriculum. Students should know that the school's teachers are united in teaching positive character, critical thinking, purposeful communication, and other broad life skills. The Visiting Team recommends that the school revise the DRSLs to refined and concise statements.
- Schoolwide Action Plan. After a serious engagement in reflection and study, Bennion Junior High School is a school that is on the move. The Visiting Team recommends that the school continue to move forward by revisiting the Schoolwide Action Plan to refine the strategies and action steps necessary to continue the school improvement process. See Chapter 5, Item a.